

Scattered memories

What tiny insignificant memories & yet how large a whole they make - for me!

The first must have been in July 1887, I think - in the big schoolroom ^(at Belle Vue, Amsterdam) one morning we were all feeling restless, picking up loose threads of work preparatory to "going home for the holidays" - when "Girls be in your places, by eleven, Miss Charlotte Mason is coming to speak to you" -

Who - why - oh bother - a friend of her mother but why? - never heard of her - well my mother knows her" - & so on, a somewhat disgruntled restless atmosphere - & certainly a very uninterested ^{company} of very ordinary schoolgirls. But what was that "sudden quiet" which closed upon us so that one could almost feel it?

A very ordinary looking little lady sitting in the midst of us, motioning us to draw up

'closer round her - a voice so quiet that one must concentrate if one wanted to listen, a smile that took no all with one sweep into my confidential partnership. This was no Dictator - no lecturer - no superior being talking down to us from a height; rather did she seem a fairy Godmother with a wand which touching lightly many quite ordinary thoughts & facts made them glow with colour & mysterious light giving a hint of hidden treasure within -

Speaking to us who were "leaving" there was no oration on the subject - that too will warn them - of what we were going to do with our lives, to become, to train, to work at - no warnings against this or that - Rather with that confidential smile, that hidden wave of her wand, she showed us what wonderful, even charming, creatures we were with just our boundless outlook, our limitless possibility & opportunity.

We were women - each would become a mother or an aunt to children somewhere -

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children with their personalities - sacred ground,
sayer feet not to be shackled

That gentle but so decided voice set up
"a little child" in the midst of us & to one
at least of her listeners life opened out
as a great & gracious adventure wherein
the stony places & briars, the tiring climbs
with aching feet, often through mists, were as
nothing compared with the joys of finding
hidden treasure. sudden beauty in unexpected
places, wide possibility of helping to clear
tangled ground & to hear in silence the song
of joy - It is difficult to recapture, after
so many years, the memory of anything definite
said by Miss Mason that day, still more
difficult perhaps to disentangle that memory from
later ones - But one fact remains very strongly
with me that she touched upon the very day
familiar details of the daily life of Home &
left them with a light upon them which in
nothing has ever ^{been} dimmed.

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After that year I remember no personal contact with Miss Charlotte Mason until the summer of 1890. Though I had heard her speak at a drawing-room meeting in my own home & I read eagerly anything she was writing - it so happened that in the summer of 1890 I left home to take a post in a big school & before leaving I had the opportunity for a visit to Miss Mason in Ambleside one afternoon. My recollection is that she talked chiefly to me of her scheme for a College to give training to students of Home Education, my own disappointment was great that it came into being just too late for me & I remember her gentle teasing, her generous advice on many points & finally that she parted from me as her "messenger" -
Nings to our's feet!

Not for some years did I discover that this visit was no accident as I had supposed but a definitely planned opportunity for personal

lack & encouragement.

How like Miss Mason!

Of what she said I have no recollection but I assume that it was on that evening that she put into my mind the two intangible but vitally necessary factors in all intercourse with a child - Reverence & a sense of humour.

Some months later she wrote to me asking me to take a post with some people who wanted a teacher trained by her for Home Education. Her College was then in its infancy & she had no one ready to leave it.

So I received my commission - ~~as I then felt it - & had no opportunity of seeing Miss Mason for some years.~~

In later years when I saw her it was only for very short intervals but

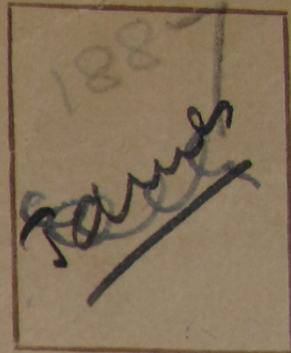
? Alice Burn

? 1934

If undelivered please return to
The Parents' Union School,
AMBLESIDE,
WESTMORLAND.

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Early Memories of This Town

W. James 1887

~~Rev. V. Parker 1889~~

" " " ~~the Miss Student her~~
~~Widow's of Fairfield & Springfield~~

1887

See
Students
file

Includes memories which
M. A. Coombs attributes to Alice Burn
daughter? George Gates? Lydia?